UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/227
7 June 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-sixth session
Item 30 of the preliminary list*

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Letter dated 6 June 1991 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach the text of a letter from the State President of the Republic of South Africa addressed to 30 African Heads of State regarding the meeting of Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 30 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Jeremy B. SHEARAR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

---

* A/46/50.

ANNEX

Text of a letter sent by the State President of South Africa to 30 African Heads of State on 23 May 1991

The 28th Summit Meeting of the Organisation of African Unity, to be held in Abuja between 2 and 5 June 1991, is in many respects the most vital one for many years. The issues to be discussed include African regional security, the African Economic Community, continental conflicts, the movement towards multi-party political systems, refugees, the debt situation and South Africa. Hopefully, serious attention will also be given to the implications for Africa of European unity.

Through contact which my Minister of Foreign Affairs and I have had with numerous African leaders and with their emissaries, I believe that we have a clearer idea of what preoccupies Africa at this stage of our political transformation. I believe that we are currently in a position to address these preoccupations.

The matter of political prisoners is clearly one of major importance. This has always been an issue which has negatively affected South Africa's relations with the international community, particularly with Africa. I enclose copies of the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes which embody the agreements reached on the issues of the release of political prisoners and the granting of amnesty*. The South African Government has strictly adhered to its commitments in terms of the agreements reached.

The Government had great difficulty in establishing whom the ANC and others regarded as political prisoners. It appealed for lists of names so that each case could be investigated and processed in accordance with the agreements reached with the ANC but we were unable by 30 April 1991 to obtain all the required information on the situation.

The Government is dependent on the co-operation of organisations which allege that political prisoners are still being detained for details of who those prisoners are and this co-operation has not always been forthcoming. The Government nevertheless remains actively seized of this issue and is anxious, in the shortest possible time, to give attention to all the cases which, in the opinion of the ANC and others, may still be unresolved. Nonetheless all those already identified have been or are being dealt with expeditiously.

---

* Not included.

Despite the complexity of the question regarding the granting of indemnity and release of political prisoners, the broadest possible categories of persons who could qualify for release and indemnity were identified and most of the prisoners were released before the target date of 30 April this year. I enclose information regarding this matter in an annexure*. In accordance with its undertaking, the Government will continue to consider applications in the interest of national reconciliation and goodwill.

The question of violence in South Africa is foremost in my mind as it is in the minds of many African Heads of State. The Government is continuously involved, on many fronts, with the prevention and combating of violence and its effects. Various measures have been implemented to curb the violence.

I am in close touch with both Mr. Mandela and Dr. Buthelezi, who speak on behalf of the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party, in an effort to secure their agreement to a concerted approach to the problem and I am encouraged by the progress we are making and by the commitment of these two leaders to the cause of peace and reconciliation in our country. There have been differences between us on the question of traditional weapons, which are an integral part of the Zulu culture, but even in this sensitive area progress has now been made.

Following extensive consultation and discussion with interested parties, the Government has been able to prohibit also the carrying of spears in public in unrest areas, except on certain traditional cultural occasions. In the latter event prior notice is to be given to the police.

As a means of involving the entire spectrum of the leadership in this country - church as well as the political and community leadership - I am convening on the 24th and 25th May 1991 a conference with the object of formulating a strategy against violence. I see this conference as a major step in combating violence. I am also creating a Standing Commission under the chairmanship of a judge or senior jurist whose mandate will be immediately to investigate complaints of violence and report to the Government. Special programmes are also being launched to promote the creation of employment opportunities and to deal with adverse social conditions, a frequent cause of violence. Billions will be spent on these programmes.

A special fund for aid to victims of violence is also being established.

I mention these measures as an indication of my total commitment to the cause of bringing violence under control and ensuring that the political process leading to a new constitutional order in South Africa remains on track. I shall not be diverted from this goal.

On the occasion of the opening of Parliament in February of this year, I once again reiterated the commitment of the South African Government to removing the last pillars of apartheid, namely the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and the Land Acts. All these laws will be repealed by the time Parliament rises at the end of the current session towards the end of June 1991.

In an effort to get constitutional negotiations under way, I have proposed, as an initial step, the convening of a multi-party conference with the aim of setting in motion a process through which consensus on a future negotiation forum may be reached. The response to this proposal has been positive and I am hopeful that it will be fully representative of the South African political spectrum. The conference will be free to discuss and decide on its chairman, its rules of procedure, its agenda and any other matters deemed to be relevant to its mandate. We plan, in consultation with the other parties, to convene this conference in the second half of this year.

We have made significant progress in moving towards a full and just democracy in South Africa. What emerges from this process will be a constitutional order supported by the majority of the people of this country. Despite the turbulence with which we now have to cope, all political leaders can feel optimistic that our goals are within reach. South Africa is already on the way back to international acceptance. Numerous African leaders have acknowledged to me that they accept the irreversibility of the process of change and look forward to South Africa playing a meaningful role in African affairs. It is primarily in Africa that our destiny lies. We share its dreams, its aspirations and its disappointments. We believe we have a contribution to make, with special reference to our own Southern African region, in the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts, towards economic and technological development and co-operation in a multitude of fields affecting our progress. We believe the time has arrived for Africa to note the developments which have occurred in South Africa and to respond in a way calculated to encourage the transition to a new South Africa and to promote co-operation between us.

The discussion during Abuja 91 provides an opportune moment to recognise the role South Africa could and should play as a member of the community of African states.

Abuja 91, Mr President, will take place against a backdrop of dramatic changes in the international environment, of shifts in economic patterns and in power balances which provide both challenges and opportunities for our continent.

The emergence of a unified European market in 1992, coupled with changes in Eastern and Central Europe and in the USSR, represent potential threats to continued economic investment and involvement in Africa by the industrialised countries. There is a school of thought that Africa runs the risk of being marginalised. We in Africa should urgently consider steps to counter this tendency.

We are experiencing a new era of peace, free from superpower rivalry, with the prospect of resolving the internal conflicts in Southern Africa. The time for isolation and mistrust has passed. South Africa's record in recent times speaks for itself. The independence of Namibia, South African contributions towards peace in Angola and Mozambique and regional economic projects such as Cahora Bassa, the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme and the Botswana Sua Pan Soda Ash Project provide some examples.

South Africa does not seek to overwhelm or dominate. We believe that we are in a position, particularly regarding technological development, to be of assistance to other countries in Africa. We believe that it has become imperative that co-operation in all fields of development be established to safeguard and advance our common interests.

I trust that Africa will recognise the contribution South Africa could make and give consideration in its debates to affording us such an opportunity.

Please accept, Mr President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

F. W. DE KLERK